

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 21, 2003

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We are writing to express our serious concern at recent reports suggesting that the Administration exaggerated evidence regarding whether high-strength aluminum tubes apparently sought by Iraq could be used for enriching uranium during nuclear weapons production. We respectfully ask you to verify whether these reports are accurate.

During your State of the Union address on January 28, 2003, you said, "Our intelligence sources tell us that he [Saddam Hussein] has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes suitable for nuclear-weapons production." Your claim was repeated March 2003 by Secretary of State Colin Powell, who displayed pictures of the aluminum tubes during his presentation before the U.N. Security Council.

However, new reports indicate that, months before your State of the Union address, experts in the Departments of State and Energy successfully included in the National Intelligence Estimate their belief that the aluminum tubes were not suitable for producing nuclear weapons. Moreover, the International Atomic Energy Agency also rejected the assertion that Iraq attempted to purchase aluminum tubes for any project other than for the reverse engineering of rockets, and informed the Administration of its assessment. These conclusions have reportedly been confirmed by an Iraqi nuclear scientist who is now cooperating with the Central Intelligence Agency.

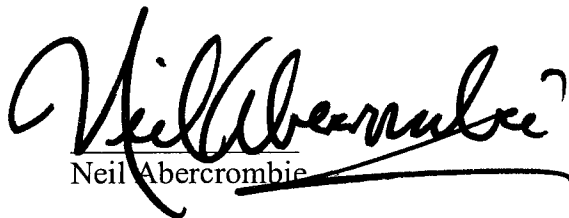
The American people had every reason to believe prior to the war that if the Administration's intelligence concerning these aluminum tubes was not entirely accurate, it was at least based on an honest, good faith assessment – not on overstated or embellished distortions. The information presented to the American people about nuclear weapons production components was certainly among the influential factors resulting in Congress approving the use of force in Iraq. However, in light of other apparent breakdowns in the handling of intelligence, the idea that the aluminum tubes story may also have been misrepresented is deeply disturbing.

Accordingly, we urge you to clearly explain to the American people the rationale behind this claim. To that end, we would appreciate it if you would respond to the following questions:

1. What information was the allegation based on?
2. Were the objections of the State and Energy Departments and the IAEA considered during the drafting of the State of the Union address? If so, why were they not considered substantial enough to exclude the allegation from the speech? And were the State and Energy Departments allowed to review this portion of the speech?
3. Does the Administration still assert that the Iraqi "attempts to purchase" these tubes were evidence of a reconstituted Iraqi nuclear weapons program? If not, why has the assertion been dropped?
4. Did the Iraqi government actually purchase any of these tubes, or did it just attempt to do so? If it did obtain these tubes, have you found evidence that they were suitable for nuclear weapons production, and if so, that they were used for that purpose?

We believe that your answers will help clear the air on this matter, and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Neil Abercrombie



William D. Delahunt



Rahm Emanuel



Joseph M. Hoeffel